

Dear Mr. Grumbles:

A review of the latest information developed to support the 2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan has been completed, and we offer the following comments.

Coastal Goal

We support revising this Goal to remove the 2015 date, since in reality this is not attainable, in the context of a five-year running average.

Within-Basin Goal

We support a revised Goal of explicit control by the individual States and Tribes over the management measures to most effectively reduce any impact to water quality in the tributaries to the Mississippi, the Mississippi River itself, and the Gulf of Mexico . An important action item necessary for this goal to be achieved is the close partnering of the federal government programs that are active in the MS River Watershed, to coordinate the discharges to the watershed with the operation schedule of the physical controls in the MS/Atchafalaya Basin.

Quality of Life Goal

We support the conversion of this goal into one of the guiding principles of the Action Plan.

Existing conservation programs are lessening erosion and nonpoint source pollution to the watersheds of Tennessee, as evidenced by the number of watershed success stories documented on EPA's own website. Our data indicates that in the time period of 1999-present, conservation measures funded through state grants and federal 319 funds have been implemented on over 109,000 farm acres in our thirteen westernmost counties whose rivers discharge directly to the Mississippi . Additionally, in 2005 the USDA-NRCS applied conservation practices to over 85,000 acres through Farm Bill programs in these same counties.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue. Please do not hesitate to call if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

Ken Givens
Commissioner

cc: Larry Maxwell
John McClurkan